

# Solihull



# Drinker

Issue No 82  
Winter 2017

**Free**  
Please take one

## The White Swan, Solihull

Solihull CAMRA's Most Improved Pub of the Year 2017-2018



*Branch chairman Carl Wright presents David Cator, Manager of the White Swan, with the award for Solihull & District CAMRA's Most Improved Pub Of The Year 2017 –2018 (more on page 5).*

**GOLD STAR**  
GOLDEN HONEY ALE

39%

**SILHILL**  
BREWERY

AWARD WINNING HAND CRAFTED ALES

**BLONDE STAR**  
TRIPLE HOPPED  
PALE ALE  
41%

**SILHILL**  
BREWERY

AWARD WINNING HAND CRAFTED ALES

**SILHILL**  
BREWERY

**PURE STAR**  
PREMIUM AMBER ALE

43%

**SILHILL**  
BREWERY

AWARD WINNING HAND CRAFTED ALES

**NORTH STAR**  
PREMIUM BLACK ALE

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**SILHILL**  
BREWERY

AWARD WINNING HAND CRAFTED ALES

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man's heart through half the year." — Sir Walter Scott**



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# Can You Help Silhill Brewery Find a New Home?

The current brewery site at Oak Farm, Catherine De Barnes, is earmarked by BUPA and Minton Group for the development of a “continuing care retirement community”. If the plans come to fruition then a planning application will be lodged with the council in December.

The site itself has been previously reviewed as part of the strategic housing land availability assessment and is classified as part brownfield and part greenfield, so the proposal will need to go through the full planning process.

At this stage it isn’t known when the brewery would have to vacate if the planning permission is granted, but, like the other 7 businesses on site, which currently employ over 50 people, their rental agreement has a very short notice period.

Silhill have spent around £8,000 recently on improvements to the brewery with a new fermenter room and new test kit. A recent purchase of a canning plant and 7 more fermenters will take their capacity up from 40 firkins to 200 firkins a week. They have also recently launched a new “Hop Star” beer which has been received well, featuring at our own beer festival at the start of Octo-

ber, and scoring third place in the beer of the festival. This expanding business needs around 2000 – 3000 square feet.

A brewery with a name like Silhill should be located within Solihull, but the owner, Mark Gregory, may need to look further afield to find a suitable site, including Warwickshire.

If you are aware of any unused premises that might fit the bill (unused farm buildings are good as brewing is classified as agricultural making the planning process easier) then please contact **Mark Gregory of Silhill Brewery** through their website or Facebook.



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## Dates For Your Diary

### Branch Meetings

*(Branch meetings start at 8.30pm except where noted otherwise)*

Monday 8th January  
Monday 5th February

Greville Arms  
Sharman's Cross

**(8.00pm start followed by the AGM)**

Monday 5th March

Harvester, Olton

### Committee Meetings

*(8.30pm start. Members may attend but only participate if invited to do so by the Committee)*

Monday 22nd January

Winged Spur, Ullenhall

### Socials

Saturday 16th December

Christmas Crawl around Kidderminster

Thursday 8th March

Long weekend away to Southampton,

—Sunday 11th March

Winchester, and Portsmouth

Saturday 10th March

Beer Festival Thank You Trip to Portsmouth

**For more details and contacts for the above, please call Secretary Allan Duffy on 01564 200 431 or visit our website: [www.solihull.camra.org.uk](http://www.solihull.camra.org.uk)**

***Most, though not all, of our local pubs have disabled access. If you wish to come to a meeting and require assistance to get inside, contact us beforehand and we will do our best to help.***

## Notice of the 2018 AGM

Notice is hereby given of the Solihull & District CAMRA AGM, which will take place at the Sharman's Cross, on Monday 5th February 2017, starting at **8.30pm**.

If any current Committee member wishes to stand down, or anyone wishes to apply to take up a Committee post (all Committee posts are open to any Solihull & District branch member), in both instances it would be appreciated if you could please email your intentions to Chairman Carl Wright at [carl.wright@swisslog.com](mailto:carl.wright@swisslog.com) at least two weeks before the meeting.

The AGM will be preceded by a short Branch Meeting starting at **8.00pm**.

Members are reminded that they will be eligible to vote at meetings on our

branch's entries in the Good Beer Guide, and for Pub of the Year, Club of the Year and Most Improved Pub/Club of the Year only if they have attended at least THREE meetings in the 12 months before the vote.

***(This requirement does not extend to nominating or seconding entries. Exemption from this rule will be at the Chairman's discretion. Meetings do not have to be consecutive to count towards the minimum of 3.)***

The criteria for qualification for these awards are published on the Solihull CAMRA website.

There will be the usual beery raffle to go towards the cost of the AGM buffet, for which beer related prize donations would be gratefully received on the night.



## *The White Swan*



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## **Most Improved Pub Of The Year 2017 - 2018**

Solihull CAMRA members met up on the 15th November at the White Swan in Solihull, which had been voted our Most Improved Pub 2017 –2018.

Carl Wright, Solihull & District CAMRA branch chair, presented landlord David Cator with the award and said "Our members visit real ale pubs frequently and are familiar with well-kept beer. The improvement in the beer quality and choice over the last year – indeed, over the last 20 months - at the White Swan has been noticed, and we know it is down to David and his team. It is a pleasure to see such an improvement in one of our town-centre locals, and we wish the White Swan all the best for the future."

Unusually for this award there hasn't been any change physically to the pub

itself, but on the night our members were given a cellar tour which explained how this improvement had been achieved. The addition of racking for cask ales, with automatic gradual tilt as the casks empty, mean the beers are disturbed as little as possible.

David Cator is a CAMRA member himself, and has applied his passion for good cask ale to his work. The improvements he has made, within the constraints of quite a small cellar, have been instrumental in the White Swan winning this year's award.

As well as the cellar tours, to complete a good evening the guest beers on offer were Salopian Helix, Backyard Marynka, Grafton Apricot Jungle, Titanic Chocolate and Vanilla Stout, and Slaters Premium Bitter.

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# Hail to the Ale!

## *Local Beer, Pub, Club & Brewery news*

The **Winged Spur** at Ullenhall re-opened on the 6th November after being closed for around 18 months. Go to page 11 for more details.

The **Wharf Tavern** has a new manager, Elysha, who took over at the end of October. Previously managing pubs in Chester and Shrewsbury, she seems to have brought some of those tastes with her. Salopian beers Shropshire Gold and Golden Thread are promised soon. On a recent visit Stratford Malty Pig was on, and Warwickshire Duck Soup was on its way.

**Strawberry Fields** in Shirley is now selling real ale again. There are two hand pumps on the bar, one of which was in use recently dispensing Butty Bach. St Austell's Tribute has also been reported as on sale.

**Missoula** in Solihull has two real ales now. Doom Bar and a guest. On a recent visit this was Silhill Gold.

**Miller and Carter** in Hockley Heath reopened on the 9th November after being closed for two and a half weeks for a "mini makeover"

The **Durham Ox** has changed hands, no longer owned by Greene King, so the beer choice will potentially be wider. North Cotswold Shagweaver is a recent guest ale. There are plans to change the layout so that the bar area is nearer the cellar. We plan to have a branch meeting there in the Spring or Summer months after they have completed their renovations.

The **Mason's Arms** in Solihull was being refurbished through November with

some fairly significant changes, based on recent Facebook posts. Re-opening was planned for the 30th November so it should be complete by the time you read this.

The **Saddlers** in Solihull is now sold subject to contract. We don't have any other details at the moment.

The **Ale Rooms**, Knowle, celebrated their first anniversary with a beer festival from the 28th November to the 2nd December.

The **Pup and Duckling** will also be having an anniversary beer festival in early February. Look out for more details on Facebook nearer the time.

The next **Inn On The Green** beer festival will probably be held in January, but details aren't currently available. Check the website or Facebook for details nearer the time. Meanwhile, Brendon Daly's latest venture, the **Hop Garden**, Harborne was due to open on the 30th November.

The **Thousand Trades Brewery** beers continue to impress at beer festivals. The latest was at Birmingham where the Hazelnut Porter sold out.

The **Rock and Roll Brewhouse** pub in the Jewellery quarter is now open between 1 and 7pm every Saturday as well as Fridays 5pm to 9pm.

While not exactly local, in the Autumn issue of the Drinker we reported that the **Bree Louise** in London would be closing on the 20th November. They now have a stay of execution until the 31st January so you still have a chance of a final visit.

## Branch Social to Stafford

At a branch meeting it was decided that a day trip to Stafford Town Centre would be a good idea for a social, and I volunteered to organise it. On reviewing the Good Beer Guide (GBG), I found 6 entries for Stafford and at least 5 of the pubs, plus two micropubs, were within easy walking distance of the train station.



*Using the train from New St Station, nine intrepid Solihull CAMRA members arrive in Stafford.*

We arrived at 11am and set off to our first port of call, the Picture House, a Wetherspoon conversion of, as the name would suggest, an old cinema, but with most of the interior features tastefully retained. There was a good



*The magnificent interior of the Picture House*

choice of about 16 beers here as there was a beer festival in progress. The beers we sampled were Woodforde's Wherry (3.8%), Amarillo Gold (4.7%), The Abbots Confession (8.5%) plus numerous others, with the majority of the beers in good condition.

After a short walk we arrived at our second port of call, the Sun Inn, a Titanic Brewery owned establishment reopened, following refurbishment, in 2011.



12 Beers were on offer including a wide range of Titanic Beers; White Star (4.5%), Captain Smith's (5.2%), Iceberg (4.1%), Anchor (4.1%), and Steerage (3.8%). Most of us opted for either Iceberg or Captain Smith's, both of which were good (3.5 out of 5). Other beers available included Vale Brewery Red Kite, Everards Tiger, Castle Rock Preservation, Spitting Feathers Old Wavertonian, and Titanic's award winning Plum Porter. The pub had a reasonably priced food menu which we took advantage of before leaving for our next hostelry.

The planned third stop was the Floodgate Ale Rooms, a micropub opened in Nov 2015, however it was closed at the



time, so a group decision was taken that we would try again on our way back to the station.

A short walk took us to the Shrewsbury Arms, a large fairly open plan pub with a covered patio at the rear, recently acquired and refurbished by Black Country Ales. This was another pub that didn't disappoint with its choice of about 10 handpumps which offered their own Black Country Ales plus a good selection of others including Banks & Taylor Dragon Slayer (4.1%), Hydes Wollongong (4.3%), Quartz Brewing Quartz Crystal (4.2%), Branscombe Vale Brewery Summa That (4.2%), and Ran Ales Rum & Raisin Stout (5.3%). I opted for the Wollongong which is a blonde ale made using two types of Australian hops, but found it a bit lacking in flavour for my taste. There were also 2 real ciders available for the people who prefer them.



### ***Moving on from the Shrewsbury Arms***

After finishing our drinks we headed off to the other micropub on the itinerary No.7 Market Square. This was the only disappointing pub we visited on the trip, as they only had one beer on handpump. The lady behind the bar did apologise, explaining that she was waiting for 2 other beers to settle. So

we made our apologies and headed straight for the Market Vaults which was situated just around the corner. (Editor's note: since we had our visit WhatPub has been updated and now states that real ale is not available here, with a wide range of bottled beers and gins being the focus.)

We were greeted very warmly by the bar staff at the Market Vaults, a pub with a dark interior which is a music venue and venue as well. Two handpumps were dispensing Wychwood Hobgoblin (4.5%) and Holden's Golden Glow (4.4%). Most of us went for the Holden's beer which was in good condition, but some of our party instead headed straight to the Olde Rose & Crown, a Joule's pub about a five minute walk away.

This is a comfortable establishment with plenty of seating and it didn't take us long to locate our advance party as the pub was fairly empty. It meant we could easily find a seat as some wanted to enjoy some of the fine bar snacks on offer including pork pies, sausage rolls and scotch eggs. A wide range of Joules beers were on offer including Slumbering Monk (4.5%), Pale Ale (4.1%) and Blonde (3.8%), I opted for the Slumbering Monk, a full bodied beer with malt & nut character.

After we polished off the bar snacks and Lawrence had his cat nap, we set off to the next pit stop of the day, the Greyhound, which is a two roomed freehouse built around 1830. The 10 minute walk past Stafford jail was worth it, as we were greeted by 8 handpumps dispensing beers mainly from Yorkshire breweries including Malinsons Ella (3.9%), Bradfield Crucibell (4.1%), and Bradfield Farmers Blonde (4%).

I chose the Farmers Blonde, a nice pale beer with a citrus kick. Some of us stayed in the front room to watch the rugby, whilst the rest decamped to the lounge to enjoy fine uninterrupted views of the walls of Stafford Jail!



### ***Finishing off at the Floodgate Ale Rooms***

After a swift getaway, we walked back through the town centre heading for the Floodgate Ale Rooms. We soon arrived at the micropub, which from the outside

looks small, but the interior extended further than I thought.

We were warmly greeted by fellow drinkers and the landlord, who served us some excellent beers including Reunion Ales Opening Gambit (3.8%), Slaters Nelson (4.3%), Dancing Duck Abduction (5.5%), Beowulf Folded Cross (4.3%) & Blythe Brewery Johnson's (5.2%). I opted for the Abduction, a malty beer with a good level of hoppiness. At this point most of the group headed back to Solihull, while two of us decided to stay longer, and I had a pint of the Opening Gambit, a well balanced session ale.

After finishing our second pint both of us decided it was time to start heading back home, and agreed it had been a good social day enjoyed by all, with a great range and choice of beers sampled.

*Dave Mckowen*

*The Wharf Tavern.... Elysha and the team welcome you to your local!*

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## Winged Spur Re-opens

The Winged Spur in Ullenhall officially re-opened on the 6th November, having been closed since May 2016.

The new owner is Jason Peck. Helen Bates, who was previously at the Holly Bush, and has 38 years experience in the trade, is the licensee and manages the pub.



The pub itself has been completely refurbished and transformed. Replacing the former “nooks and crannies” is a large, light and airy, open plan layout which can cater for up to 117 diners and drinkers. There is also a smaller, more intimate area that can accommodate 10-12 people, suitable for small private groups. The old smoking shack has been replaced by the new main dining area, integrated into the rest of



*The new airy main dining area*

the pub. The exterior has also had a makeover with a new colour scheme.



There is a range of food available ranging from sandwiches, lunch menu, and main menu.

In its first week of trading since re-opening it has been exceptionally busy, with a mixture of locals and visitors from Henley and other nearby villages.



Three regular beers are offered. Sharp's Doom Bar, Thwaites Wainwright, and Bank's Bitter, with a fourth beer as a guest.

Helen spends a lot of effort getting the cask beer just right, “treating it like a baby”, and the Wainwright I tried was in very good condition indeed. On the evidence so far this pub should have a bright future.



## Ludlow Day Out

Ludlow is a pleasant market town in Shropshire which boasts a castle and a famous food festival. Our trip food wise was one dimensional... breweries, pubs and beer!



***Glyn gives us the brewery tour***

Our brewery trip first. Ludlow Brewery is in the town, most convenient for our subsequent pub crawl. Ludlow Brewery was formed by Gary and Alison Walters in May 2006 in Corve Street. Gary assumed the role of Head Brewer, his first beer being Gold, soon followed by The Boiling Well, Best Black Knight and pale ale Blonde in 2014. Since then the range has been supplemented with Stairway. Production outgrew the site and in 2010 they opened the new 20 barrel brewery in an abandoned railway shed. The building is large enough both for brewing and a Tap and Visitor

Centre, which opened in 2011. Our tour guide was Glyn Pugh who explained the brewing process, handing round Fuggles and Golding hops from Tenbury Wells for us to smell, and surprisingly for me told us they used Irish Moss in the beer clearing process. Cel-lar-brite is used during the cooling of the wort, followed by a shot of Ising-glass in the barrel to ensure a clear beer. We also stuck our noses in beer at different stages of production, which certainly got our taste buds going, leading us to the tasting tray that Glyn had set up. All the brewery's beers were available, including samples of the malts used, and we availed ourselves of a drink or two before retiring to the Tap Room, waiting to regroup before setting off for the pub crawl.



***Taking over the Ludlow Brewery Tap Room.***

Our first port of call was the Feathers Hotel. A superb half-timbered Tudor inn, it's probably one of the best known inns in the country. The bar, however, is thoroughly modern and had Ludlow Best and Boiling Well, together with Hobson's Old Prickly and Twisted Spire. The Twisted Spire went down a treat, and was a welcome



change from Ludlow which tends to dominate the town. By the by, many years ago I stayed at the Feathers and found the rooms to be very tired looking, not reflecting the historic importance of the inn. Maybe it has changed since my visit.

A short walk from the town centre brought us to the Queens, a genuine free house. I was however disappointed to see that Ludlow Blonde and Gold, with Wye Valley Butty Bach, were the only beers available, a most unimaginative range for a pub that boasts of being a family run freehold pub. Accommodation is also available here if you so wish.

Moving on we poked our heads into the Olde Bull Ring Tavern on our way to the Rose and Crown, but decided to give it a miss.

The Rose and Crown is a Joules pub, well hidden in a courtyard off Church Street. I was pleased to see Stonehenge Sign of Spring, Arbor Smac My Brew Up, a beautiful beer at 4.8%, and Colchester Brewery's Sweeney Todd. Joules took over the pub in 2016, a welcome addition to the pub scene in Ludlow.



*The Rose and Crown, Ludlow*

Our next stop was the Church Inn, a short stagger away. Always a favourite with me it had Ludlow, Hobsons and Salopian on. However I failed to make notes as to what they were: I may have been getting well-oiled by then.

We did pop our noses into the Wheat-sheaf, rapidly exiting when we were met by Marston's Pedigree, Jennings Cumberland and Lancaster Bomber: a range that did not interest us at all.



*The Dog Hangs Well is well hidden!*

And so to our last pub, or should I say a house with a bar in it. The Dog Hangs Well is not easy to find. Go to 14 Corve Street and you are there. Opening times are variable so if you wish to visit, check first. One beer was available, Vale Brewery's Gravitas. I do know that it had not been available during our previous pub crawls and furthermore it was not to my taste, well you can't win them all.

That concluded our visit to Ludlow, and hearty thanks were extended to Paul Wigley, who arranged it and kept us in reasonable order.

If you fancy joining us on a future trip please check out our Diary Dates page.

*Steve Dyson*

# The History of Solihull CAMRA – Part Two

**October 2017 marked the return of the Solihull CAMRA beer festival as well as the 35th anniversary of Solihull CAMRA. To commemorate this we are re-printing the second part of an article that first appeared in Solihull Drinker 42, with thanks to Julia Wright and her archive of Solihull Drinker magazines, as well as the original author Steve Wood.**

**You can read more about the branch and it's history, as well as the history of our local pubs on our branch website [www.solihull.camra.org.uk](http://www.solihull.camra.org.uk)**

In Part One of this piece in the last Drinker we looked at the history of Solihull CAMRA from 1971 to May 1982 when a couple of trial meetings were held to test support.

Although initial support was a bit thin, the local activists of the time were not deterred. Local member Clive Deacon had now been joined by Malcolm Glass and Andy Lyndon, and their first action was to arrange a social evening for local Branches at the Three Tuns in Henley-in-Arden in June 1982. As only 7 local members attended, a key decision was made to be more proactive. They hoped to gain enough support to form an independent CAMRA Branch, rather than continuing as a sub-Branch of Coventry CAMRA. Armed with an address list of 57 local members, Clive, Malcolm and Andy decided to go door-to-door canvassing. They were met with a range of reactions, but the objective of gathering together a group of active members was successful.

This was demonstrated by the next event, an informal social at the Saddlers Arms, Solihull in July 1982. This was attended by 16 local members, most of whom had been contacted via the door-knocking campaign. Attendees included Brian &

Dave Queenborough who were to prove valuable additions to the cause. Another notable feature of the evening was the simple newsheet produced by Clive Deacon for the event, called The Boro Banter (the fore-runner of The Solihull Drinker).

Edition 2 of The Banter was produced for the next event, a social at the Red Lion, Knowle in August. This was attended by 18 people, including future Chairman Steve Dyson and wife Jean. Confidence was growing, so it was decided to hold a final test meeting at the Golden Lion, Solihull (now the Beech House). Area Organiser Andy Beaton was invited to judge if there was enough support to form a Branch. The answer was a resounding yes. 18 people attended, with enough volunteers for an initial Committee.

So a historic moment had been reached, Solihull was proudly declared an official Branch of the Campaign, and the inaugural meeting was held at the Red Lion, Knowle on 12th October 1982. The first Committee was elected, consisting of:

Malcolm Glass (Chairman); Clive Deacon (Secretary); Brian Queenborough (Treasurer); Eric Moseley (Membership); Andy Lyndon (Socials); Richard Adkins (Pub surveys); Alan Machin (Publicity)

The first act of this fledgling Branch was to present local pub The Railway, Dorridge with a certificate for appearing in the first ten Good Beer Guides (although the Branch demonstrated their independence by not including it in the 11th the following year!). The end of 1982 also saw the opening of a local Real Ale Off-Licence, Bernies, in Shirley, which has been a major asset to local campaigning ever since.

Since these early pioneering days, the Solihull Branch has gone from strength to strength. Clive Deacon took over as Chairman in 1984, a local pub guide was published in 1987, and that same year also saw the award of the first Solihull & Dis-



# THE FIELDHOUSE

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trict Pub of the Year (won by the Navigation, Lapworth). In 1988 Steve Dyson took over, local membership reached 100 in 1991, while 1994 saw the first Solihull area CAMRA Beer Festival, above the Vaults in Knowle. Brenda Duffy became the new Chair in 1995, a new annual award for the Most Improved Pub was instigated in 1997, the same year that saw the Branch newsletter relaunched as The Solihull Drinker following the 52 editions of the original, produced between 1982 & 1995.

In 2000 new chairman Dave Hobbs saw local membership reach the 200 mark. Shortly before he stood down in 2002, the Branch held the first of its many successful Beer Festivals at the British Legion in Solihull.

Dave was replaced as Chair by Ray Cooke; during his tenure the Branch created its website and produced the first comprehensive 28 page Local Pub Guide in 2003. 2005 saw the start of a regular column in a local newspaper, entitled 'The Beer Hunter'. Finally, in 2006 Roger Dipple became the 7th Chair of the Branch, who saw Branch membership reach the 300 mark in his first year at the helm.

So, thanks to all involved in helping make the Branch the success it is — a lot has been achieved in 25 years. Who knows what the next 25 years will bring?

*Steve Wood*

***This concludes the re-publication of this article from 2007. We hope you enjoyed it.***

## FIELDHOUSE

10 Knightcote Drive, Solihull 0121 703 9209

## COLEBROOK

Haslucks Green Road, Shirley 0121 744 6871

## OLTON TAVERN

Lode Lane, Solihull. 0121 742 0515

## WOODMANS REST

Union Road, Solihull. 0121 745 3904

## BULLS HEAD

1320 Stratford Road, Hall Green. 0121 7020931

## RED LION

1672 High Street, Knowle. 01564 771522



EMBER INNS



A festive bar scene with beer taps, glasses, and greenery. The background shows a wooden bar with several beer taps, some with labels like 'Pilsner' and 'Pe'. There are green plants and a red Christmas bauble in the foreground. The text is overlaid on a red rectangular background.

*Seasons Greetings*

*& a prosperous 2018*

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£2.49 pint**

# Birmingham Midweek Pub Crawl

For this walk we decided to stay closer to home, namely Birmingham. We started at the Anchor, Bradford Street, in Digbeth. It has recently come under new management and the range of beers decreased. Bearing this in mind we thought it was worth checking it out. We were not disappointed. Shiny Affinity and Disco Balls were in beautiful condition supported by the more commonly available Wye Valley Bitter. The Anchor is a true street corner Victorian local and for all that a most comfortable place to be.



*Settling down at the Anchor.*

We then moved on round the corner to the Eagle and Tun in Banbury Street. Another tiled Victorian pub, it is very much still in the restoration period. It also has a large bottled beer off license within the pub. It was a bit chilly when we were there and unfortunately, not all the beers were at their best. Slaters Premium had to be sent back. However Oakham Citra, Green Duck Duck and Cover and AJ's Stuck in the Mud were fine. Food was also served here, but most of us popped into the Woodman up the road for a bite accompanied by 7 beers.

A long walk took us to another relative newcomer, the Gunmakers Arms, Bath Street. It is the home of the Two Towers Brewery and had 4 of the brewery's beers on tap, Hockley Gold, Bhacker Akhams, Chamberlain Pale Ale and Elec-

tric Ale. The beers were in good condition but nothing stood out for me. The pub has since been refurbished and is well worth a visit as it holds a comprehensive range of events.

Another relative newcomer to the Birmingham scene is Edmund's Brewhouse in Edmund Street. The beers are brewed on the premises and I am afraid to say they did not inspire us. American IPA and Gold Hop were their beers supplemented by Bath Gem, Caledonian Edinburgh Castle, and Theaksons Lightfoot. It's a typical city centre pub, does food, comfortable and expensive!

Round the corner into Waterloo Street we visited the Pure Craft Bar & Kitchen. It's a modern café bar in appearance but they do keep good quality beer. Purity Mad Goose, UBU, and Bunny Hop were on tap. From other breweries were Rooster Azacca and a past CAMRA Champion Beer Tiny Rebel's Cwtch. The Bunny Hop I tried was superb, with the Roosters a little behind it.

That was to be the end of our crawl, however one of our party, John, knew of a new bar recently opened. So off we went to the Indian Brewery in Livery Street. It is close to the rear entrance to Snow Hill tram station, housed in one of the arches. I found it a great place, Bohemian, full of character and very busy. It does food too. As to the beers, 4 were on tap: Indian Peacock, Bombay Honey, Indian Summer, and IPA. The IPA was a cracker but ran out while we were there: definitely a must visit for any beer lover. A good 12 of us started our crawl and all remained to the end. Well done crew!

Please check out our website for details of future midweek crawls, or check that you are signed up to emails from CAMRA.

*Steve Dyson*

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# Beer Sales Falling

Sales of beer in Britain's pubs suffered a worrying 3.6% drop in the third quarter of 2017, the worst performance for five years. The news prompted urgent calls for a halt to yet more beer tax rises in the Budget on 22nd November.

The 3.6% drop in on-trade sales from July to September, represents an astonishing 35 million fewer pints sold in Britain's pubs, bars, and restaurants, when compared with the same period in 2016. Beer sales have been hit by a substantial 3.9 per cent tax rise in the March Budget, but the Chancellor was planning yet another increase in his second Budget in November.

Coupled with pressure from sky-high business rates, the move would see many more pubs closing, said Brigid Simmonds, Chief Executive of the British Beer & Pub Association.

"When the Government was cutting or freezing beer duty from 2013-15, sales

of British beer stabilised, after years of steep decline. With sales down this quarter, following the Budget tax hike, urgent action from the Chancellor is needed."

"Beer has had a 39 per cent tax rise in the past decade. With tax rates 14 times higher than in Germany, these levels are unsustainable."

"We need fair taxes for British beer, so that brewers and pub operators can invest in thriving pubs, and take advantage of new opportunities to export more beer around the world as we leave the EU."

Beer sales are already under pressure with a worldwide drop in sales of 1.8% reported earlier this year, after peaking in 2013. This trend is not just limited to beer, with the market for all alcoholic drinks contracting by 1.3% in 2016.

Biggest losers globally in beer sales were China (4.2%), Brazil (5.3%), and Russia (7.8%)

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## Solihull Pubs & Clubs CAMRA Member Discounts

Ember Inns (**Fieldhouse, Colebrook, Woodmans Rest, Olton Tavern, Red Lion Knowle**) - 20p/ pint except Mondays where all cask ales are £2.49

**Fieldhouse** additionally gives 20% off food with a discount card available from the bar. For other offers see the advert on page 15

**Flute and Flagon and Missoula** give 10% off real ales (not applicable with the £1.99/ pint offer at the Flute and Flagon)

**Lady Lane Wharf** 30p/pint Monday to Thursday between 5pm and 8pm

**Drum and Monkey, Wharf Tavern, The Greswolde Arms** give 10% off real ales

Vintage Inns (**Red Lion Earlswood**) 20p/ pint

Please note that any discounts given to CAMRA members are at the discretion of the licensee, and these may be withdrawn at any time. They are a privilege given to card carrying CAMRA members as a gesture of goodwill.



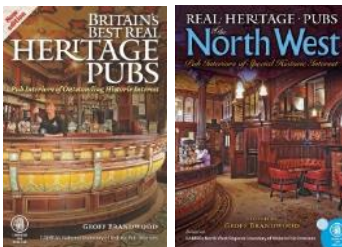
## Check Out CAMRA's Christmas Gift Offers

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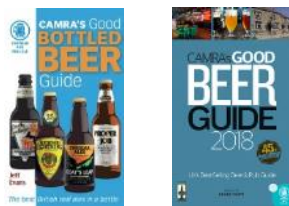


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Get the "present problem" out of the way early this year, and share a bit of your passion for real ale with friends and family. There are great offers on CAMRA books and a wonderful range of gifts or stocking fillers!



To see the full range go to <https://shop.camra.org.uk>. Combined with a Gift Membership it makes an even better deal (see page 32)



The Solihull Drinker is the quarterly newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Views expressed in the Drinker are not necessarily those of the Branch or CAMRA.



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**

Contributions, comments and advertising enquiries should be sent to Solihull Drinker Editor, 2 Dunton Hall Road, Shirley, Solihull B90 2RA; or via email to

**[davidcove@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:davidcove@hotmail.co.uk)**

Printed by Thistle Print Ltd, Leeds

Solihull CAMRA 2017©

The Editor has the right to amend or shorten any items in the newsletter, but will always honour the spirit & intention of the contribution.

## THE BLUE BELL CIDER HOUSE

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## CAMRA Members' Weekend 2018

Start making your plans for a trip to Coventry next April, as that's where the 2018 Members' Weekend, AGM and Conference will be held. The weekend (20-22 April) will be based in the University of Warwick's Butterworth Hall, on the outskirts of the city.

In addition to taking part in all the conference action there's lots of things to do in the area. As well as visiting one or two fine pubs nearby, Coventry, Kenilworth, Warwick and Leamington Spa are just 10 minutes away and Rugby and Stratford-upon Avon less than 30 minutes by car or taxi.

Hosted by the Coventry and District Branch, part of the West Midlands region, this is a great opportunity to get involved in deciding the future direction

of CAMRA, and meet members from all over the country.

Apart from the conference and taking part in the extra-curricular activities, on and off campus, you can also volunteer to help.

For more details of events planned over the weekend check out What's Brewing or <https://agm.camra.org.uk> over the coming months.

Pre-registration or signing up as a volunteer is now open either using the form on the next page, or online.

The Midlands region are looking forward to seeing you there. Normally for each AGM West Midlands CAMRA have a T-shirt, making them distinctive and easy to spot. Watch out for further details early next year.



**CAMPAIGN  
FOR  
REAL ALE**



# University of Warwick

20th-22nd April 2018

Hosted by Coventry & District branch

Please register online at [agm.camra.org.uk](http://agm.camra.org.uk) or complete the form below and return to: CAMRA, 230 Hatfield Road, St Albans AL1 4LW.

Membership # \_\_\_\_\_ Joint Membership # (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Surname \_\_\_\_\_ Surname \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to volunteer, please indicate when you can help and the staffing officer will contact you in due course. Your information will be treated in accordance with CAMRA's Privacy policy.  
[www.camra.org.uk/privacy-policy](http://www.camra.org.uk/privacy-policy)

**Tue AM/PM   Wed AM/PM   Thur AM/PM   Fri AM/PM   Sat AM/PM   Sun AM/PM**

Please circle if you have any specialist skills: first aider / cellarmen / local knowledge / logistics / customer service / other.

(Closing date for postal & online registration is Tuesday 3rd April 2018)





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## **Midlands Pub Is One Of The Best 4 In The Country**

CAMRA has named the best four pubs in the country as part of its Pub of the Year 2017 competition, one of the most respected and well-known pub awards in the UK.

One finalist is the Weavers Real Ale House in Kidderminster, a relatively new one-room micropub.



It is deceptively spacious inside, with bench seating along the sides, plenty of tables and a conversational atmosphere. Light and airy, the walls display pictures of old Kidderminster and beer memorabilia. It serves eight beers, four ciders and a perry on handpump. Cobs are always available. Just a short walk from the railway station, this is a convenient stop-off for a pint and a chat on the way into town. Public parking is a short distance away.

The owner Dean Cartwright said: "We took over the running of the pub just two years ago and are over the moon to be in the final four! While we've slightly modernised it and extended the beer range, we've also retained the quirky 'front-room' feel to the pub. We have a small team of incredibly enthusiastic and friendly staff who love to talk about real ale in a welcoming and conversational atmosphere. It's just amazing to be this far in the competition out of thousands of pubs across the country - it means a lot to know how much some people care about the pub."

Gary Timmins, CAMRA Regional Director for the West Midlands said: "The Weavers Real Ale House was the first micropub to open in Kidderminster and has helped spur a real ale revival in pubs across the town. The friendly welcome, convivial atmosphere for a chat and consistently excellent quality wide range of ales and ciders quickly developed a following and also made it into a must-visit venue for visitors to the town. Above all, the greatest credit is due to the bar team whose friendliness, knowledge and enthusiasm shine through whenever anybody enters, and help to make it into an outstanding pub. Well done to them all for being recognised in the National Final!"

We wish the Weavers good luck in the final judging and hope to be visiting soon to try them out again.



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## Some Beer Jottings From New Zealand

A special holiday to New Zealand gave me lots of opportunity to sample ales that were new to me, including the famous Speights, Monteiths, Tui and others too numerous to detail.

While there we visited the Founders Heritage Park (a New Zealand version of Avoncroft) for a spot of lunch, and a look at some of the town's old buildings. One houses the Hop & Beer Museum which shares the stories of early brewers, who started beer-making in the town over 170 years ago.

One of these operates the Brewery & Cafe inside the park, and the process can be viewed through a glass wall behind the counter. The Park Life Brewery started life in 1854 as Founders, and it is now the 6th generation of the Duncan family that is doing the brewing. Nelson is the main area in New Zealand that grows commercial hops as, lying at 41 degrees of latitude, it has the ideal day length hours for hop production, so I was told. I was about to order a pint when I noticed they did samplers for all 6 of their ales so I was pleased to be able to try them all.

Their regulars are Parklife Pale (5.2%)



and Pilsner (4.7%) which were a copper coloured best bitter and pale yellow lager respectively, with a slightly sweet finish.

Our visit coincided with the Nelson Arts fortnight so there were also 4 special festival seasonal beers.

Better Off Red (4%) was a red/brown ale with a crisp taste and a dry finish, and Golden Ale (also 4%) was a thin, easy drinking beer with a pleasing orange colour. The special Art Sup Porter (4.8%) was a lovely deep brown to black colour, with a typical biscuity taste. My favourite, not to my surprise, was Showhopper (5.5%), a bronze India Pale style brewed especially for the festival. This was not a harsh IPA and was very quaffable.

I guessed that Citra hops had come nowhere near the wort, and this was confirmed by friendly head brewer Callum Duncan who told me NZ Cascade, Nelson, Motueka, & Savon hops had been used, the last still not exported or available outside New Zealand.

Starting life as Founders, a family concern, the brewery became tied to a larger brewer in order to secure bottling capability, but recently reverted back to being a fully independent craft brewer, rebranded as Park Life Brewing Co. All its ales go into casks (and carry home containers), so alas you won't find any bottles to sample anywhere. However, you can find their details and make contact on Facebook. Maybe you'll get to taste one of Callum's brews if he gets invited over by Wetherspoon as an international brewer for one of their festivals.

*John Edwards*



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\*not to be used in conjunction with any other offer, excludes Craftworks. This offer is redeemable from The Bartons Arms only.

# CAMRA Campaign on Taxation

Following a campaign by CAMRA, MPs from all political parties spoke out in support of fairer tax treatment for the beer and pub industry in Parliament on the 31st October.

However, there was no confirmation of what measures, if any, would be presented in the Autumn budget to protect the sector.

Thousands of beer drinkers and pub-goers had called on MPs to send the Chancellor a message he couldn't ignore, with CAMRA also urging members to write to their MPs in advance of the debate.

The debate highlighted the pressures that the pub and brewing industries face to survive in an environment of rising beer duty and business rate increases. Campaigners warned that pubs could face closure thanks to a "triple whammy" of taxation, rate increases, and an end to rate relief unless politicians start supporting the British pub industry.

MPs were asked to get behind calls to the Chancellor to show more support for vital community pubs, which find it increasingly hard to remain competitive.

Licensees are struggling following the 2p a pint increase on beer duty in March's Budget and are facing a further 2p a pint increase in November's Budget.

Pubs faced a second blow this year when a change in the business rates system saw four in ten licensees facing rates hikes. The temporary £1,000 a pub rate relief offered by the Treasury comes to an end in March, leaving

pubs to absorb the full force of the increases, which in some cases could simply mean going out of business.

And the final part of the "triple-whammy" for pubs will see the upper limit on annual business rate rises for community pubs increased from 12.5 per cent to 17.5 per cent, which could make the difference between survival and closure for many vital local pubs.

CAMRA is calling for a £5,000 a pub business rate discount to be introduced.

Colin Valentine, CAMRA's National Chairman, said: "The beer and pub sector is already overburdened by tax, specifically business rates and beer duty - with tax making up a third of the price of a pint in a pub. Customers now find the price of beer less affordable, which means decreased sales and the likelihood of more boarded up pubs.

"Pubs deliver benefits to individuals, providing responsible and social environments to enjoy a drink. They benefit local economies with local employment and they provide a large amount of revenue for the Treasury. Failure to support pubs will see all these benefits reduced. We'll see more people drinking at home, less local employment and reduced Government revenue.

Beer sales have shown a worrying drop since the budget (see page 20 for more details), and the number of pubs has slumped from 67,800 in 1982 to fewer than 52,000 now.

If you value your local pub and want to support the CAMRA campaigns, please join up, join in, join the campaign at [www.camra.org.uk/joinup](http://www.camra.org.uk/joinup)



# Solihull CAMRA Beer Festival 2017

After a year off caused by venue arrangements falling through at a late stage, the Solihull Beer Festival made a welcome return in 2017. In addition, we returned to the Royal British Legion's Broomfield Hall, venue for a dozen previous festivals, and it was good to be back.

Open on Friday and Saturday, from noon both days, we catered to a steady stream of real ale fans eager to sample the 45 casks of beer, plus 6 ciders and perries, we had on offer.

As ever, there was a fine selection to choose from. We had the current Champion Beer of Britain, Goat's Milk from the local Church End brewery, plus a previous champion, 1872 Porter, from Elland brewery. They were among the first to run out, along with Arts of Teleforce from Thousand Trades brewing, run by one of our own members, Paul Scrivens.

Another feather in Paul's cap is that Arts of Teleforce was runner-up in our Beer of the Festival vote. Victory was claimed by the 1872 Porter, while two beers tied for third place: Hop Star from our very own Silhill brewery, and Abbeydale's Salvation #5 Coffee and Doughnut Stout.

Feedback on the festival was overwhelmingly positive. Once again we had two separate bars, one covering the stronger beers (4.5% and up) plus ciders and perries, and one for the remaining beers. This helped keep traffic in the main bar area flowing, even when people were standing near the stage listening to the guitar and fiddle duo who entertained us on Saturday night. It never felt too crowded.

Many thanks to all our sponsors. The overall sponsor was the Pup and Duckling micro-pub, while fellow micro-pub the Ale Rooms sponsored the bars. Silhill brewery sponsored the colourful festival

glasses, and Thousand Trades sponsored the home brew competition. This was definitely appropriate, as Paul won the home brew competition in 2015, shortly before going commercial.

On the organisational side the expanded festival committee did a great job of ensuring all the various elements came together over the weekend. As always, we had numerous volunteers doing everything from constructing the racking and loading the beer, through to serving behind the bar, on the membership stand, and at the door. If you enjoyed the festival, please do come along to one of our branch meetings or socials, and consider volunteering for next year's festival. All volunteers are entitled to buy discounted beer, and are also invited on a "Thank You Trip" after the festival.

*Martin Buck (Beer Festival Organiser)*

## THE WHITE LION

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[rowingtonclub@live.co.uk](mailto:rowingtonclub@live.co.uk)

[facebook.com/RowingtonSocialClub](https://www.facebook.com/RowingtonSocialClub)



Rowington Club, Rowington Green, Rowington, Warwick CV35 7DB

# Membership Matters

If you are reading this publication whilst enjoying a pint of real ale, whether in your local or at home and you are not a CAMRA member, you may be asking yourself why should I join CAMRA? As well as promoting real ale, we as a campaigning group also support the brewing industry, publicans, consumers rights, and community groups nationwide who are either trying to prevent their pub from being sold to developers, or being permanently closed. If you are interested in joining the campaign visit [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk).

As the festive season is almost upon us again, and the thought of traipsing around the high street looking for the ideal Christmas present for someone, who is a real ale fan, fills you with dread, I may have the solution to the problem, without leaving the comfort of your own home. What about a CAMRA gift membership? It won't break the bank, and some start from as little as £25 (equating to 48p per week). There are concessions for under-26 and over-60 age groups, and some gift memberships also include a copy of the 2018 Good Beer Guide. Please see the advert overleaf for more details.

With the gift membership they will get a monthly newspaper called "What's Brewing" with articles on what's happening on the real ale scene nationally, plus a quarterly maga-

zine titled "Beer" which has many interesting articles covering a range of topics from pubs, breweries, food, beer, homebrew, and bottled beers.

They will also be entitled to free or reduced entry to the many beer festivals organised by local CAMRA branches, and others, all over the country, and lastly they will get £20 worth of Wetherspoon Real Ale/Cider discount vouchers. Visit [www.camra.org.uk](http://www.camra.org.uk) to see the full range of great money saving offers. There is a list of local pubs/clubs on page 20 which offer a discount for card carrying CAMRA members.

Solihull & District CAMRA branch hold monthly meetings at local pubs with real ale on offer, but if you don't fancy that come along and meet us on one of our social events. Dates are in the diary section on page 4. We are a friendly bunch, and will endeavour to make you more than welcome. Someone might even buy you a pint!!!. You can also visit [www.solihull.camra.org.uk](http://www.solihull.camra.org.uk) to find out what else is happening on the real ale scene locally.

Finally I would like to wish all of you reading this publication a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and enjoy whatever ale you drink over the festive season and beyond.

*Dave Mckowen*  
Membership Secretary

<b>Useful Contact Numbers</b>		<b>Socials</b>	
<b>Chairman</b>		Paul Wigley	07402 312457
Carl Wright	0121 603 1621	<b>Pubs Campaigning/Beer Festival</b>	
<b>Secretary</b>		Martin Buck	01564 770708
Allan Duffy	01564 200431	<b>Solihull Drinker Editor</b>	
<b>Membership</b>		David Cove	0121 603 6057
Dave Mckowen	01564 778955	<b>Press &amp; Publicity</b>	
		Julia Wright	0121 603 1621

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For advertising rates: call 0121 603 6057 or email [davidcove@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:davidcove@hotmail.co.uk)

**Solihull Drinker Issue No. 82** Solihull CAMRA 2017 ©

Printed by Thistle Print Ltd, Leeds.

The 83rd edition of the Solihull Drinker will be published on Friday 2nd March 2018. Please note that the deadline for copy, advertising and any other contributions is Friday 2nd February. Thank you in advance to all contributors.



# Wrap up Christmas with CAMRA gift membership



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